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(54) A tracking system for optical storage media

(57) A tracking system for optical storage media e.g. an optical disk, comprising a matrix (14) of four sensors (A, B, C, D) receiving a beam reflected by the disk; one processing channel for each sensor signal, including means (20, 21) for producing a binary signal from the sensor signal, and an adjustable edge delay circuit (23,

23') operating on the binary signal; one adder (25, 27) for each pair of channels corresponding to diagonal sensors of the matrix; and a phase detector (29) comparing the outputs of the adders.

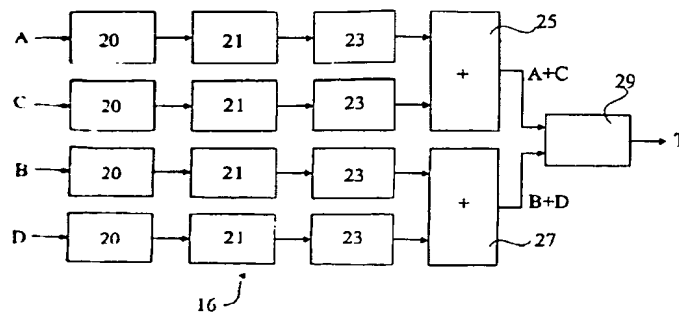


Fig 4

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Description

[0001] The present invention relates to a tracking system for optical storage media e.g. for a laser disk, which insures a correct alignment of a laser beam on a track being read. The invention more specifically relates to a circuit for processing the signals provided by a photo-sensor.

Figure 1 schematically shows a conventional tracking system for a laser disk. A laser beam L is directed perpendicularly to the surface of an optical disk 10 by a semi-reflecting transparent plate 12. A servo mechanism 13 displaces the laser beam L so that it follows the desired track of the disk.

The laser beam reflected by disk 10 is sensed by a photosensor 14. A circuit 16 processes the signals provided by photosensor 14 to produce a tracking signal T indicative of the position of the laser beam on photosensor 14.

Tracking signal T is provided to a servo-control circuit 18 which accordingly controls the servo mechanism 13 to make the tracking signal converge to a desired value.

Figure 2 shows in more detail the structure of a photosensor 14 used for optical storage media, e.g. laser disks, compact disks (CD), Digital Video Disks (DVDs), and illustrates the signals produced by such a photosensor when the laser beam is correctly aligned.

Photosensor 14 is a square matrix of four independent sensor areas A, B, C and D.

When the laser beam is correctly aligned, it produces a spot centered on sensor 14. The surface of the laser disk has a mirror layer and pits are used to store the digital information on the disk. Due to the depth of the pits, light from the laser will be reflected in-focus or out of focus to the photo-sensor. An in-focus reflection results in a clear spot on the sensor.

To simplify, it can be said that the digital information on the laser disk results in a spot/no-spot signal on the sensor.

On the left of figure 2, it is schematically shown that the laser beam is passing from a non-reflective area to a reflective area, whereby circle S progressively fills with light. The unlit portion of circle S is shown in dotted lines. The interface I between the sensor pairs A/B and C/D is assumed to be parallel to the track being read. Then, the growing spot arriving on sensor 14 has a head edge E which moves along interface I, progressively scanning sensor 14 within circle S (from left to right in figure 2).

On the right of figure 2, the laser beam is passing from a reflective area to a non-reflective area of the disk. Then, the spot progressively fades out as a tail edge E scans circle S along interface I.

When the laser beam is correctly aligned, sensor areas A and D receive the same amount of light at any time, which is also true for sensor areas B and C. When the spot starts to appear on the left of figure 2, signals A and D, produced by sensor areas A and D, progres-

sively rise until edge E reaches the center of sensor 14. Then, signals A and D stay constant at a maximum value while signals B and C, produced by sensor areas B and C, start to rise progressively. Signals B and C reach their maximum value when the spot is full, i.e. when edge E reaches the right most limit of circle S.

When the spot starts to fade out, on the right of figure 2, signals A and D progressively decrease until edge E reaches the center of sensor 14. At this point, signals A and D are at their minimum value while signals B and C start to decrease progressively until the spot has completely faded out.

Waveforms A+C and B+D will be described later.

In figure 3, the laser beam is incorrectly aligned and produces a spot S on sensor 14 which is not centered. The spot will be shifted upwards or downwards, depending on the direction of the alignment error.

In the example of figure 3, the spot is shifted downwards. In this case, the light intensity received by sensor area D starts increasing or decreasing earlier than the light intensity received by area A, while the intensity received by area C starts increasing or decreasing later than the intensity received by area B. This is illustrated by the waveforms of signals A to D.

Moreover, the maximum amplitude of signals A and B is lower than that of signals C and D, because sensor areas A and B will always receive less light than areas C and D.

It is to be understood that the description given above is schematic and describes the reality in a somehow simplified way.

It will be remarked that the misalignment of the laser beam is indicated both by the amplitude differences and the phase shifts of the sensor signals.

An object of the invention is to provide a simple, yet reliable, circuit for producing a tracking signal indicative of the alignment of the laser beam from the sensor signals. Such a tracking signal circuit uses the phase differences and not the amplitudes of the sensor signals.

[0002] The invention more specifically aims at a tracking system for an optical disk, comprising matrix of four sensors receiving a beam reflected by the disk; one processing channel for each sensor signal, including means for producing a binary signal from the sensor signal, and an adjustable edge delay circuit operating on the binary signal; one adder for each pair of channels corresponding to diagonal sensors of the matrix; and a phase detector comparing the outputs of the adders.

[0003] According to an embodiment of the invention, the means for producing the binary signal comprises a limiter, the output signal of which is input to a data slicer which outputs the binary signal.

[0004] According to an embodiment of the invention, each edge delay circuit comprises means for charging a capacitor at a constant current when the corresponding binary signal switches to a first logic state; means for discharging the capacitor at said constant current when the binary signal switches to the second logic state;

means for stopping charging and discharging of the capacitor between the moment when the voltage across the capacitor reaches a high threshold or a low threshold and a subsequent switching of the binary signal; and a first comparator connected to switch the state of an output signal when the voltage across the capacitor crosses a third threshold comprised between the first and second thresholds.

[0005] According to an embodiment of the invention, said means for charging, discharging and stopping comprise first and second equal value constant current sources coupled to a first supply terminal; a first switch controlled by the binary signal for selectively coupling the first current source to the first or second terminal of the capacitor; a flip-flop set to a first state when the high threshold is reached and set to a second state when the low threshold is reached; a second switch controlled by the flip-flop for selectively coupling the second current source to the first or second terminal of the capacitor; and third and fourth constant current sources having values equal to those of the first and second current sources, each coupling a second supply terminal to a respective terminal of said capacitor.

[0006] According to an embodiment of the invention, the adjustable delay circuit comprises a second comparator for setting the flip-flop to the first state, receiving the voltage on the first terminal of the capacitor and a first reference voltage; and a third comparator for setting the flip-flop to the second state, receiving the voltage on the second terminal of the capacitor and said first reference voltage.

[0007] According to an embodiment of the invention, the system comprises a servo-control system for displacing the beam in one direction perpendicularly to the disk tracks when the phase detector indicates a phase lag, and for displacing the beam in the opposite direction when the phase detector indicates a phase lead. The foregoing and other objects, features, aspects and advantages of the invention will become apparent from the following detailed description of embodiments, given by way of illustration and not of limitation with reference to the accompanying drawings.

Figure 1, previously described, schematically shows a tracking system for a laser disk; figure 2 schematically shows a specific sensor usable in a system such as that of figure 1, and illustrates the signals it produces when the laser beam is correctly aligned; figure 3 schematically illustrates the signals produced by the sensor of figure 2 when the laser beam is not correctly aligned; figure 4 schematically shows an embodiment of a circuit according to the invention for processing the signals delivered by the sensor; figure 5 shows an advantageous embodiment of an adjustable delay circuit usable in the circuit of figure 4; and

figure 6 shows signals over time for illustrating the operation of the delay circuit of figure 5.

As previously mentioned, a circuit according to the invention for processing the sensor signals A, B, C and D provided by sensor 14 only uses the phase differences between these signals to produce a tracking signal. This approach will allow the use of simple digital circuits early in the regulation loop. Digital circuits are preferred because their reliability is less process dependent than for analog circuits, and they will usually occupy less surface.

The phase differences which will be measured between the four sensor signals are particularly small and any phase offset error in one of the four signals will cause a substantial error in the resulting tracking signal. Such undesired phase offsets are critical in devices operating at high transfer rates, such as DVD units.

A solution for correcting these phase offsets is to insert an adjustable delay circuit in each of the sensor signal paths. Then, the delay circuit for the signal having the maximum phase lag is adjusted to a minimum value, while the delay circuit for the signal having the maximum phase lead is adjusted to the highest value. During the calibration of the system, the tracking loop is open. The laser disk does not rotate exactly around its center. Due to this, the laser will cover a track from the upper limit to the lower limit and the amplitude of the signal coming from the sensor will vary. With an averaging technique, the delays are adjusted such that they give all the same average result.

A problem lies in the choice of the delay circuits and of the elements to include in each signal path so that the processing circuit will operate at high frequency and occupy a minimum surface. The operation at high frequency is particularly critical in DVD units. This choice is one aspect of the invention.

Figure 4 shows an embodiment of a tracking signal circuit 16 according to the invention. Each sensor signal A, B, C or D is provided to circuitry 20, 21 for converting the sensor signal into a binary signal. Circuit 20 may be a limiter which amplifies the corresponding sensor signal to such extent that its slopes become practically vertical and its amplitude reaches the power supply voltage of the circuit. Indeed, as illustrated in figures 2 and 3, the slopes of the sensor signals are progressive. Additionally, the slopes have been shown as linear for sake of simplicity. In practice, they are not linear and are thus difficult to exploit.

Circuit 21 may be a data slicer or zero-crossing detector.

The adjustable delay circuits 23 are placed after the data slicers 21. Thus, the adjustable delay circuits operate on binary signals. Since the amplitude differences of the sensor signals are not exploited, it is needless to use analog delay circuits which do not alter amplitude information.

A fast delay circuit for the invention will be easier to

design than a fast analog delay circuit, since it will only need to delay signal edges and not signal shapes. An example of a particularly advantageous edge delay circuit will be described later.

An advantage of the quasi-linear edge delay circuit, especially as described below, is that it can easily be adapted to the operating frequency of the system by changing a bias current, a reference level, or a capacitor value.

In order to increase the transfer rate, especially in the case of the use of the disk as a data storage medium, e.g. in connection with a computer, it is desirable to increase the rotation speed of the disk, thereby increasing the maximum possible data transfer rate.

The group-delay of an analog system must be flat over the whole operating frequency range in order to operate correctly. Increasing the operating frequency in the system with analog delay-lines means a higher bandwidth for the analog circuits used to assure a flat group-delay. This demand for a larger bandwidth becomes very difficult to fulfill and will consume a lot of additional supply power. In a multi-standard system, the analog delay-line must be designed for the highest operating frequency. Changing the working frequency can be accomplished by changing bias-currents. Due to the large difference in operation frequency between the different standards, it becomes difficult to adapt the delay-lines for lower operating frequencies: only the bias current can be changed and it becomes very small for low-frequency, which makes it very sensitive to errors.

An adder 25 adds the outputs of the two adjustable delay circuits 23 of signals A and C, while an adder 27 adds the outputs of the two adjustable delay circuits 23 of signals B and D. In fact, adders 25 and 27 advantageously are OR gates. The outputs of adders 25 and 27 are provided to a phase detector 29 which will provide the tracking signal T indicative of the alignment of the laser beam.

Signals A+C and B+D, respectively provided by adders 25 and 27, are shown in figures 2 and 3. In figure 2, signals A+C and B+D are in phase, which will indicate a correct alignment of the laser beam. These signals rise as soon as signals A and D are at half their rising excursion and fall when signals B and C are at half their falling excursion.

As shown in figure 3, corresponding to a misaligned laser beam, signal A+C has a slight phase lead over signal B+D. Signal A+C rises when signal A is at half its rising excursion and falls when signal C is at half its falling excursion. Signal B+D rises when signal D is at half its rising excursion and falls when signal B is at half its falling excursion.

In the example of figure 3, the phase lead of signal A+C indicates that the spot is too low on sensor 14. If the spot were too high, this would be indicated by a phase lead of signal B+D.

The delay-lines are used to correct the errors in the optical system and the different electrical circuits. All four

delay-lines are needed, because the errors are in principle randomly distributed.

Limiter 20 may advantageously be comprised of a very high gain comparator receiving the corresponding sensor signal at one input and a reference voltage at the other input, this reference voltage being adjusted to the mean value of the sensor signal, for example by a resistor and capacitor network. The output signal of such a limiter could have sufficiently sharp edges to constitute a binary signal exploitable by the adjustable delay circuit 23.

Data slicer 21 is provided to obtain even sharper edges. It may e.g. be comprised of a comparator receiving the output signal of limiter 20 at one input and a constant reference voltage at the other input. The reference voltage will be halfway between the two power supply voltages of the circuit.

Figure 5 shows an advantageous embodiment of an adjustable edge delay circuit which operates on binary signals. It comprises two constant current sources 50 and 51, each coupling one of the terminals of a capacitor C to a supply voltage Vcc. A constant current source 52 has one terminal connected to ground GND and its other terminal is selectively connected to one of the two terminals of capacitor C by a switch S1. Switch S1 is controlled by the input signal to delay Vin. A constant current source 53 is, like source 52, connected to voltage GND and to either one of the terminals of capacitor C through a switch S2. Switch S2 is controlled by the output of a flip-flop 55, for example an RS flip-flop.

Current sources 50 and 51 deliver a same constant current I, while current sources 52 and 53 sink this same current I.

A first terminal of capacitor C is connected to the non-inverting input of a comparator 57 whose output is connected to the set input S of flip-flop 55. The inverting input of comparator 57 receives a constant reference voltage Vr. Similarly, the second terminal of capacitor C is connected to the non-inverting input of a comparator 58. The output of comparator 58 is connected to the reset input R of flip-flop 55. The inverting input of comparator 58 receives the same reference voltage Vr as comparator 57.

The delayed signal Vout is provided by a comparator 60 whose inverting input is connected to the first terminal of capacitor C and whose non-inverting input is connected to the second terminal of capacitor C.

Since both terminals of capacitor C are only connected to high impedance elements, their common mode may float. To avoid this, capacitor C is preferably replaced with the circuit shown in dotted lines comprising two series connected capacitors C'. The connection node between these capacitors C' is coupled to a fixed common mode voltage Vcm, which may be one of the supply voltages. Such a connection does not change the operating principle of the circuit.

Figure 6 illustrates the input signal Vin, the current Ic in capacitor C, the voltage Vc across capacitor C and the

output signal Vout.

The polarities of voltage V_c and current I_c are those indicated in figure 5, i.e. I_c is positive when it flows from right to left in capacitor C and V_c is the voltage between the non-inverting input and the inverting input of comparator 60.

Initially, the input signal V_{in} is low and the current I_c in capacitor C is zero, which means that voltage V_c is constant, here equal, for example, to a low threshold $-2V_r$. Signal Vout is low. It is assumed that switch S1 is in the position indicated by 2 and that switch S2 is in the shown position indicated by 1. Flip-flop 15 is in the set state.

In this initial state, the current delivered by source 50 entirely flows through switch S2 into source 53, while the current delivered by source 51 entirely flows through switch S1 into source 52. No current flows through capacitor C.

When signal V_{in} goes high, switch S1 assumes shown position 1. Then, the current delivered by source 50 directly flows into sources 52 and 53, while the current I delivered by source 51 flows into sources 52 and 53 through capacitor C. The current in capacitor C thus switches to a positive value I. As a consequence, the voltage V_c across this capacitor increases linearly, starting from its initial value $-2V_r$. As soon as voltage V_c starts increasing, the output of comparator 57 goes low. When the voltage V_c across capacitor C becomes zero, comparator 60 switches, whereby signal Vout goes high. The rising edge of signal Vout is thus delayed from the rising edge of signal V_{in} by a value τ , equal to $2V_r \cdot C/I$.

When the voltage at the non-inverting input of comparator 58 reaches value V_r , which is when the voltage V_c across capacitor C reaches value $2V_r$, the output of comparator 58 goes high and resets flip-flop 55. Switch S2 then assumes position 2, where the current of source 51 directly flows into source 53, while the current of source 50 still flows into source 52 through switch S1. No current flows through capacitor C, whereby voltage V_c remains constant.

When signal V_{in} goes low again, S1 is set back to position 2, whereby the current of source 51 is directly delivered to sources 52 and 53, while the current of source 50 is delivered to sources 52 and 53 through capacitor C. A constant negative current $-I$ then flows through capacitor C, whereby voltage V_c decreases linearly from value $2V_r$. As soon as voltage V_c starts decreasing, the output of comparator 58 goes low.

When voltage V_c reaches zero again, comparator 60 switches, causing signal Vout to go low.

Finally, when the voltage at the non-inverting input of comparator 57 reaches value V_r , which is when voltage V_c reaches value $-2V_r$, the output of comparator 57 goes high and sets flip-flop 55. Switch S2 is set back to position 1, and the circuit is back in its initial conditions. It will be noted that, since comparator 60 switches when voltage V_c is half-way between values $-2V_r$ and $2V_r$,

and since the charge and discharge currents $\pm I$, determining the rising and falling slopes of voltage V_c , are identical, a same delay τ is obtained for the rising edges and for the falling edges of signal V_{in} , which is desirable.

As shown by the expression of the delay τ given above, this delay is proportional to voltage V_r and inversely proportional to value I. Thus, each of the values V_r and I may be used to adjust the delay. The use of value V_r will be preferred because it allows a proportional adjustment. The delay also depends on value C, but this value is more complicate to adjust.

The right portion of figure 6 illustrates a limit operating condition. The current I is reduced to a value such that voltage V_c takes an entire time interval between a rising edge and the next falling edge of signal V_{in} to increase from value $-2V_r$ up to value $2V_r$. This corresponds to the maximum delay setting. Indeed, if the charge and discharge currents are further reduced, in this example, voltage V_c will not reach value $2V_r$ before it starts decreasing again, whereby the desirable symmetry is lost. In other words, value $4V_r \cdot C/I$ should be smaller than the minimum time interval separating two consecutive edges of the input signal V_{in} .

The maximum obtainable delay, visible in the right portion of figure 6, is half this minimum time interval. In order to obtain a greater delay, comparator 60 may have a hysteresis cycle whose high threshold is slightly below threshold $2V_r$ and whose low threshold is slightly above threshold $-2V_r$. The maximum delay then approaches value $4V_r \cdot C/I$. The hysteresis cycle should be symmetrical to obtain an exact but delayed copy of the input signal. If a still greater delay is needed, several delay circuits will be cascaded.

Claims

1. A tracking system for an optical disk, comprising:

- sensors (A, B, C, D) receiving a beam reflected by the disk;
- one processing channel for each sensor signal, including means (20, 21) for producing a binary signal from the sensor signal, and an adjustable edge delay circuit (23, 23') operating on the binary signal; and
- a phase detector (29) comparing the output signals of the edge delay circuit.

2. A tracking system for an optical disk, comprising:

- a matrix (14) of four sensors (A, B, C, D) receiving a beam reflected by the disk;
- one processing channel for each sensor signal, including means (20, 21) for producing a binary signal from the sensor signal, and an adjustable edge delay circuit (23, 23') operating on the binary signal;

- one adder (25, 27) for each pair of channels corresponding to diagonal sensors of the matrix; and
 - a phase detector (29) comparing the outputs of the adders.
3. The tracking system according to claim 1 or 2, characterized in that the means for producing the binary signal comprises a limiter (20), the output signal of which is input to a data slicer (21) which outputs the binary signal.
4. The tracking system according to any of claims 1 to 3, characterized in that each edge delay circuit (23) comprises:
- means (S1, 50-53) for charging a capacitor (C) at a constant current (I) when the corresponding binary signal switches to a first logic state;
 - means (S1, 50-53) for discharging the capacitor at said constant current (I) when the binary signal switches to the second logic state;
 - means (S2, 55) for stopping charging and discharging of the capacitor between the moment when the voltage (Vc) across the capacitor reaches a high threshold (2Vr) or a low threshold (-2Vr) and a subsequent switching of the binary signal; and
 - a first comparator (60) connected to switch the state of an output signal (Vout) when the voltage across the capacitor crosses a third threshold (0) comprised between the first and second thresholds.
5. The tracking system according to claim 4, characterized in that said means for charging, discharging and stopping comprise:
- first and second equal value constant current sources (52, 53) coupled to a first supply terminal (GND);
 - a first switch (S1) controlled by the binary signal for selectively coupling the first current source (52) to the first or second terminal of the capacitor;
 - a flip-flop (55) set to a first state when the high threshold (2Vr) is reached and set to a second state when the low threshold (-2Vr) is reached;
 - a second switch (S2) controlled by the flip-flop for selectively coupling the second current source (53) to the first or second terminal of the capacitor; and
 - third and fourth constant current sources (50, 51) having values equal to those of the first and second current sources, each coupling a second supply terminal (Vcc) to a respective terminal of said capacitor.
6. The tracking system according to claim 5, characterized in that the adjustable delay circuit (23) comprises:
- a second comparator (57) for setting the flip-flop to the first state, receiving the voltage on the first terminal of the capacitor and a first reference voltage (Vr); and
 - a third comparator (58) for setting the flip-flop to the second state, receiving the voltage on the second terminal of the capacitor and said first reference voltage (Vr).
7. The tracking system according to any of claims 1 to 6, characterized in that it comprises a servo-control system (18, 13) for displacing the beam in one direction perpendicularly to the disk tracks when the phase detector (29) indicates a phase lag, and for displacing the beam in the opposite direction when the phase detector indicates a phase lead.

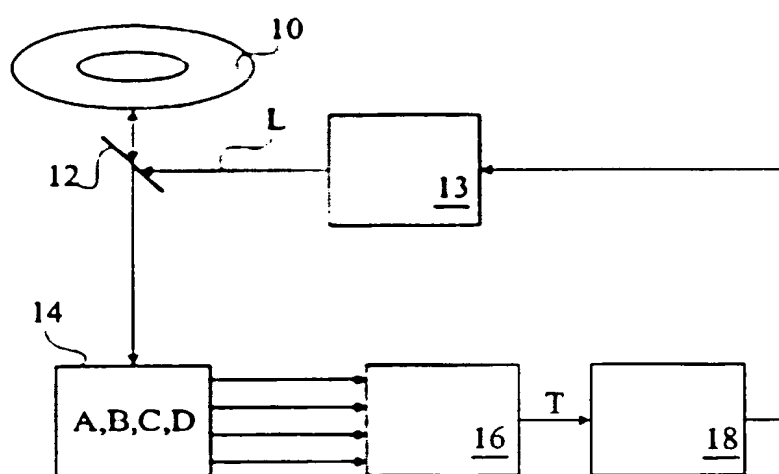


Fig 1

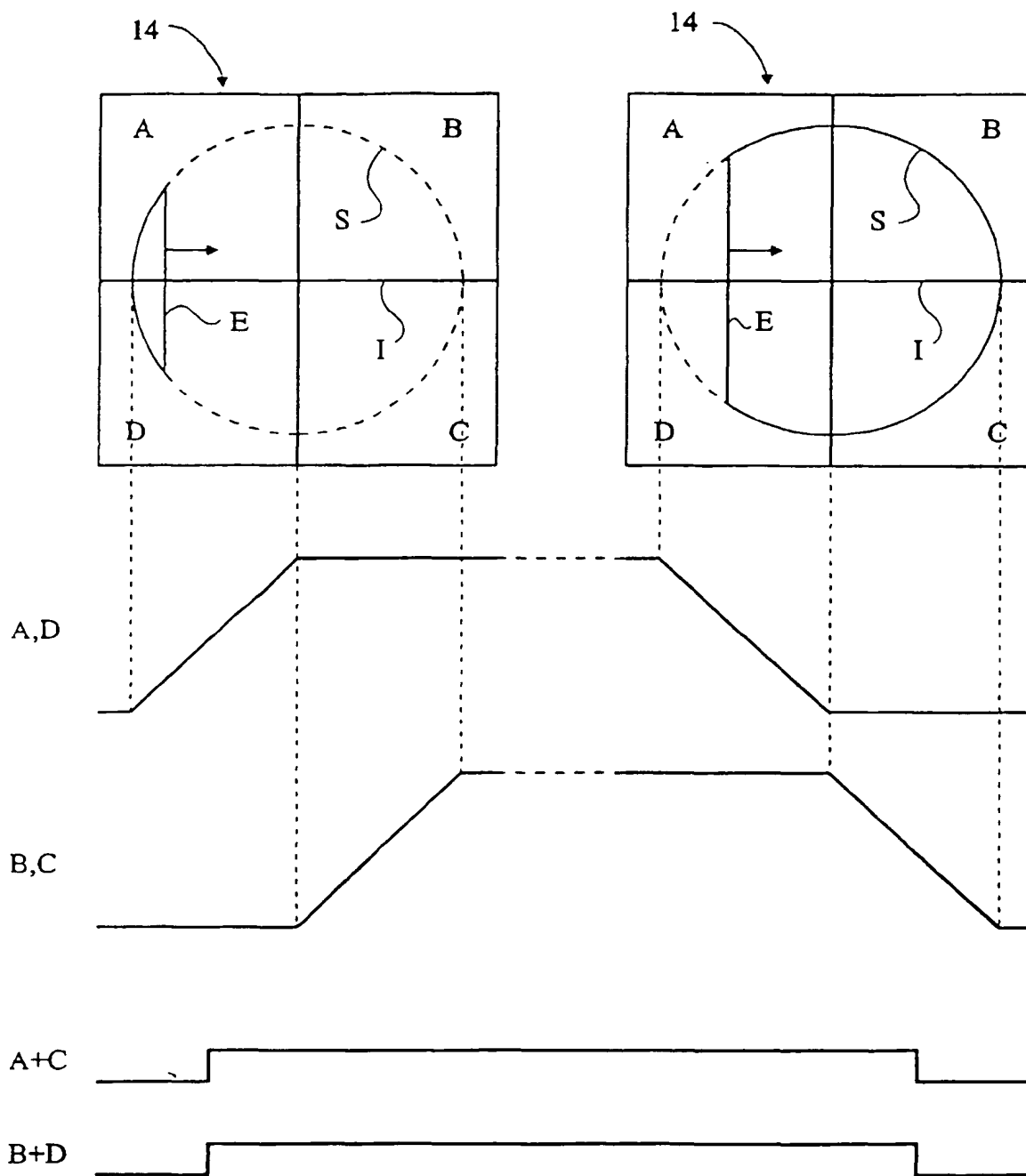


Fig 2

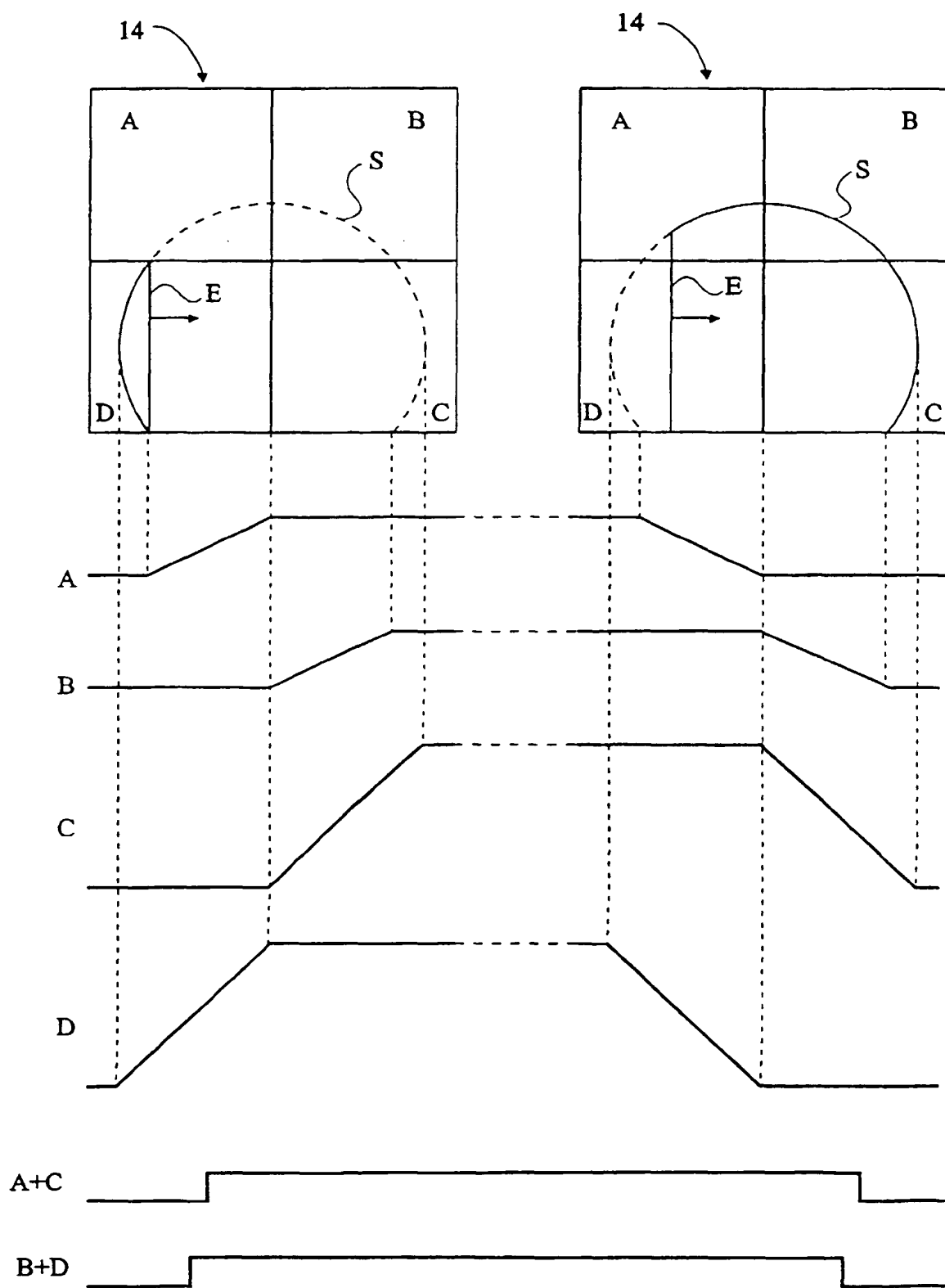


Fig 3

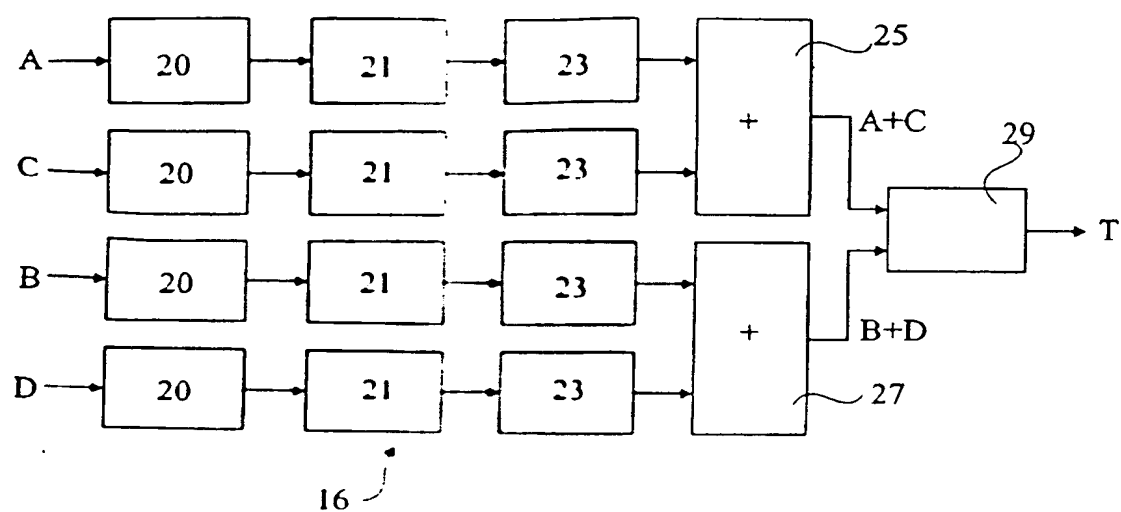


Fig 4

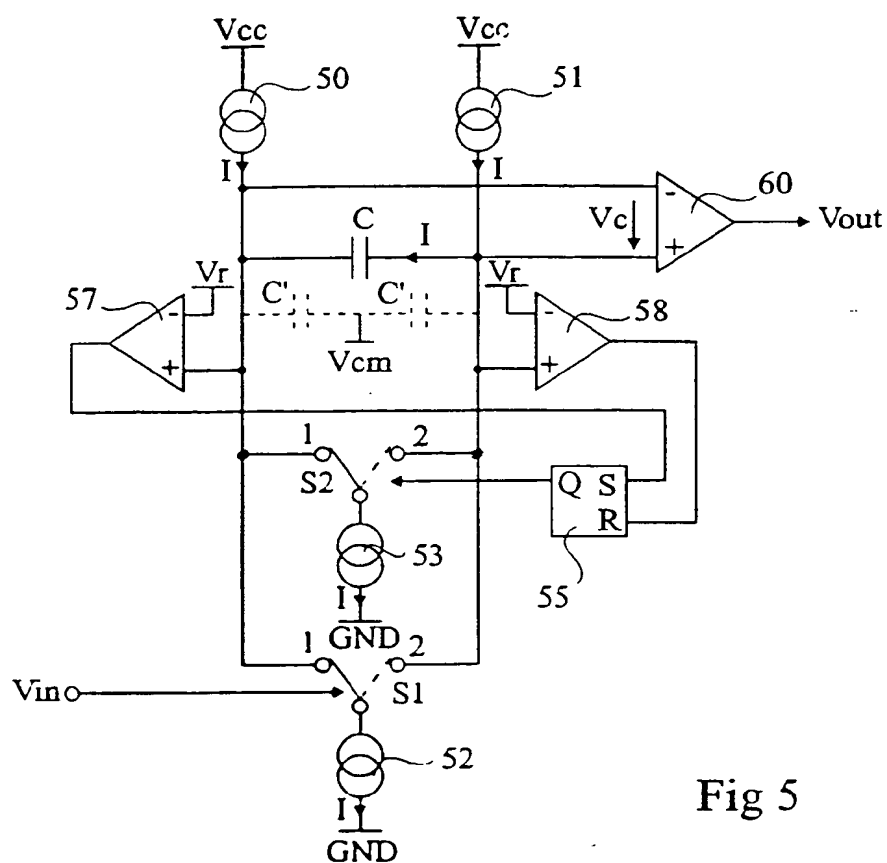


Fig 5

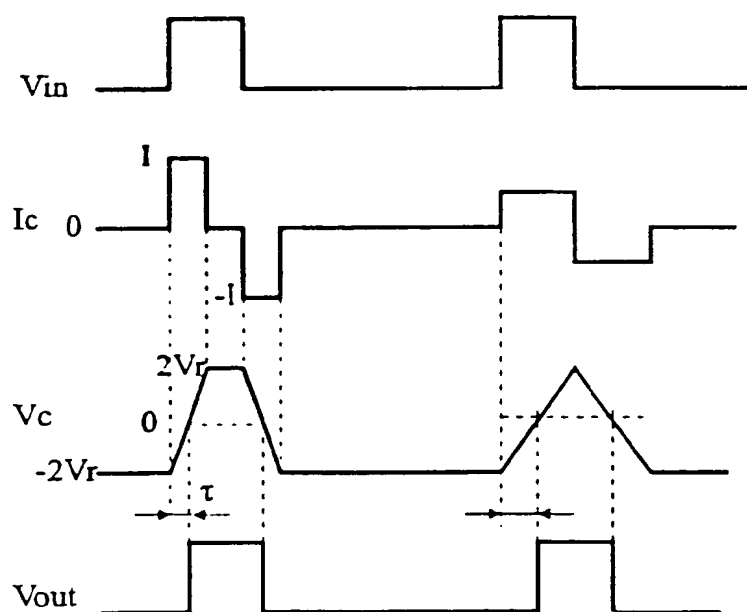


Fig 6



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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 97 40 1834

| DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT | | | |
|--|--|----------------------------------|--|
| Category | Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages | Relevant to claim | CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int.Cl.6) |
| X | US 5 258 968 A (MATSUDA NORIO ET AL) * the whole document * | 1-3,7 | G11B7/09 |
| A | --- PATENT ABSTRACTS OF JAPAN vol. 096, no. 003, 29 March 1996 & JP 07 296395 A (VICTOR CO OF JAPAN LTD), 10 November 1995, * abstract * | 1-3,7 | |
| A | --- EP 0 238 162 A (MATSUSHITA ELECTRIC IND CO LTD) * the whole document * | 1,2,7 | |
| A | --- EP 0 749 118 A (SONY CORP) * column 7, line 40 - column 8, line 22; figure 7 * ----- | 1,2,7 | |
| The present search report has been drawn up for all claims | | | TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int.Cl.6) |
| | | | G11B |
| Place of search | | Date of completion of the search | Examiner |
| THE HAGUE | | 30 December 1997 | Holubov, C |
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